

The American University in Cairo

School of Humanities and Social Sciences

THE PARADOX OF MASCULINITY IN SHAKESPEARE'S

MACBETH

A Thesis Submitted to

The Department of English and Comparative Literature

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Master of Arts

By

Howayda Mohamed Elenany

Under the supervision of

Dr. **Justin Kolb**

April/ 2015

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ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes the ambivalent definition of manhood in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. It explores the normative cultural constructions of masculinity carried forth from ancient times to the Renaissance to situate the character of Macbeth in the realm of heroic masculinity. By applying the framework of Freud's psychoanalytic theory, particularly in its interpretation of gender and the role of the unconscious, Shakespeare's male hero's struggle to establish, maintain and defend his masculinity becomes comprehensible. The societal and cultural expectations that define masculinity appear at odds not only with the world of the play, but with the world in general. Culture and society alone do not shape identity; deeper and more complex psychic structures explain human motivation and behavior. Studying the character of Macbeth in the light of the influences of the cultural and psychoanalytic, the notion of masculinity gains new meanings.

INTRODUCTION

Upon reading Lady Macbeth's soliloquy where she invites the evil spirits to unsex her and transform her into a creature without heart or remorse, one must question not only the image of the female that Shakespeare is painting, but also more importantly the image of the male that that very image implies. The female who is traditionally associated with qualities such as obedience, nurturance, submissiveness and kindness is transformed into a ruthless, remorseless and heartless creature. The male, on the other hand, who is identified as dominant, powerful and decisive is transformed into a play-thing manipulated by his more powerful female counterpart. In *Macbeth*, the traditional definitions of femininity and masculinity as such become confused and confusing notions, reflecting Shakespeare's own uncertainty about what constitutes either. The essential questions that the text raises regarding gender fail to find definitive answers when exclusively analyzed in the context of culture.

This thesis will focus on the notion of masculinity by unpacking the dominant cultural definitions associated with it. I will argue that Shakespeare has not intended his text to be a terrain for the exploration of masculinity as much as a demonstration of his conviction that there is an unbridgeable "gap between masculinity as defined by culture and its achievement" (Smith 138). The eventual destruction of Shakespeare's male protagonist at the end of the play takes place not because of Macbeth's failure to ascribe to an ideal of manhood in the context of his or our culture, but in a broader sense, it is Shakespeare's own failure in determining what it means to be a man. The only conclusive message that dominates at the close of the play is that manhood is not set in stone, that good and evil can co-exist in the same body and that codes of ethics and notions of morality are matters of relative importance in a world that is shifty, deceptive and therefore unreliable.

Traditional Shakespearean criticism has viewed *Macbeth* as "an endorsement of King James I's character and policies" (Wells 122). Because of James's pacifist tendencies, Shakespeare is believed to have twisted the facts from his main narrative source Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Ireland* (1587) to appease the king. For example, Macbeth's tyranny and aggressive violence are believed to be intentionally exaggerated to create a stark contrast to James's "eirenic" qualities. For such criticism, politics becomes the focal point of the play, reducing it to a medium of political manipulation. This approach, however, does not do justice to a work of such profound complexity for many reasons. First, considering the work exclusively in the light of politics undermines the multiple other factors that influence the writing of masculinity in the play. Secondly, it reduces the text to a pre-determined critique of masculinity influenced by the politics of the Renaissance.

In his Chapter "Arms and the Man", Robin Headlam Wells proposes that there are two "mutually opposed conceptions of manhood" in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (140). One, he claims, is based on heroic epic and the other on the Gospels with none claiming superiority over the other. However, my thesis will align my arguments with the first claim despite the open invitation to entertain both. I believe that the similarities that Shakespeare draws in his representation of Macbeth as a war hero do not place him remotely from his ancient epic counterparts. Aeneas and Achilles, for example epitomize heroic masculinity; they are not only famed for their nobility and justice, but also for their ferocity and vindictive brutality. Other critics and scholars have also defined ideal masculinity in similar perplexing terms. Eugene Waith equates the perfect male with the Herculean hero, who transgresses normal limits and Torquato Tasso concurs that heroes defy conventional morality. The world that Shakespeare paints in his play not only exemplifies that same paradoxical definition, but it also celebrates it with the sole intention of

discrediting it. Apart from being an "anatomy of heroic values", as Wells claims, "*Macbeth* offers no solution to the conundrum it dramatizes" (143).

Although the politics of the Renaissance may have determined much of the negotiation of masculinity in *Macbeth*, the subject should not be considered from one critical vantage-point. There are other forces at play in the text that should not be disclaimed, such as the social, cultural and the psychological. Examined in the light of these influences, the subject of masculinity gains "a more rounded view" (Smith 5). Shakespeare represents through *Macbeth* the struggle of the male to conform to an ideal of manhood endorsed by culture and society. The captain's account of the battle between Macbeth and Macdonwald and later with Norway, paints the image of Macbeth as an epic hero. Like no other on the battle ground, he is depicted fighting like a tiger in defense of his king and kingdom. The blood he sheds is made insignificant as compared to the victories he achieves and his valor and brutality reign supreme. However, that manly image is soon shaken when this larger than life hero becomes so easily swayed by his shrewish wife's venomous taunts. His attempts to fight off her evil soliciting demonstrate a strong conviction and unfaltering resolve on his part to identify manhood with natural morality and honor, yet he eventually fails to comply with this manly self-image and succumbs to her wishes.

Face to face not with an opponent that he can fight and conquer in the battlefield, but with the horrible threat of emasculation, Shakespeare's male protagonist is compelled to re-think his masculinity vis-a-vis his all too masculine wife. In a cultural sense where patriarchy determines the supremacy of the male, masculinity becomes threatened and intimidated by its feminine counterpart. Lady Macbeth's determination and boldness as a female evoke Macbeth's feeling of inferiority and lack. However, the cultural context is not the only context that can interpret where this conflict emerges. The text itself underscores a psychological structure

worthy of investigation especially when Lady Macbeth draws herself as the murdering mother who is willing to sacrifice her baby to fulfill her personal ambition. The image immediately calls to attention the theories of psychoanalysis regarding infantile experiences and thus the text gains a new dimension of perplexity.

By examining *Macbeth* in the framework of Freud's psychoanalytic theory, much of the actions in *Macbeth* find new meanings. In his essay "On Dreams", Freud writes that "The dream-thoughts which we first come across as we proceed with our analysis often strike us by the unusual form in which they are expressed; they are not clothed in the prosaic language usually employed by our thoughts, but are on the contrary represented symbolically by means of similes and metaphors, in images resembling those of poetic speech" (26). The world that the writer paints is similar to the dream thought that Freud discusses above. As dreams bear symbolic values, so does a literary text. The images, metaphors and similes that *Macbeth* is abundant with are products of the writer's unconscious thoughts. Through probing the writer's unconscious, these symbols are translated to meaningful ends. The psychoanalytic approach sheds more light on the subjectivity of the author and his intentions in directing his text. It is through the text that we are able to understand the author's motivations and his mode of consciousness and thinking. His work becomes a projection of his psyche and the conflicts and anxieties he represents merge with the conflicts and anxieties he feels in his culture. I will argue in this thesis that psychoanalysis is a valuable approach of interpretation for two reasons. First, it investigates the author's paradoxes that are transmuted through the lives of his characters. Second, it invites speculative insights into the lives of the characters themselves. As an instrument of criticism, the psychoanalytic literary approach empowers the interpretation of the world behind the text, the seemingly hidden beyond the blatantly stated.

The application of psychoanalysis is therefore instrumental in dismantling a text as complex as *Macbeth*, particularly because of the interpretation that psychoanalysis offers regarding gender. Freud postulated in his 1925 writings that "all individuals, as a result of their bisexual disposition and of cross inheritance, combine in themselves both masculine and feminine characteristics, so that pure masculinity and femininity remain theoretical constructions of uncertain content" (Minsky 63-64). Interestingly, Shakespeare's *Macbeth* engages in the same debate back in the 1600's. Lady Macbeth's masculine characteristics and Macbeth's more feminized ones will be explained in the light of this particular theory.

The paradox of masculinity in *Macbeth* cannot be comprehended in isolation from the psychoanalytic influences at play. It is true that social and cultural pressures impact human decision, but the social has its root in the psychoanalytic. Deeper and more complex psychological issues determine a man's behavior, particularly if that man falls from grace. Janet Adelman and Coppelia Kahn contribute to the possibility of interpreting the play in the framework of Freud's psychoanalysis, thus giving new meanings to the dynamics of masculinity. The theories of both propose that underlying the dominant cultural and social conflict in the play is a more profound conflict of identity that is influenced in its shaping by experiences from childhood. The theories of Adelman and Kahn on the father/son struggle and the mother/infant matrix are two predominant elements that impose themselves on the psychoanalytic reading of the play. By applying those theories to the play and connecting them to the attitudes and behaviors of the major characters, a more possible understanding of the conundrum of masculinity can be achieved.

Chapter 1

The Definition of Man

Social, cultural and political factors play a significant role in defining masculinity. Since these factors vary widely depending on the demands of the time and the requirements of society, it becomes almost impossible to find an ideal of male identity that is universally recognizable. When a certain culture demands a certain ideal of masculinity, the male is therefore compelled to follow the common and acknowledged norms. His thoughts and actions are only justified according to the standard parameters this culture draws. A man's ultimate dream is to be honored, respected, and given the recognition he believes he deserves for his valor, strength or boldness. His worst fear, however, is to be disdained or criticized for failing to comply fully with these ideals. These social, cultural and political pressures pose continuous challenges to the construction and perception of the self, sometimes driving one to erratic actions that may breach personal, moral or ethical codes. In an attempt to defend the character of Macbeth, widely criticized as tyrant, immoral and self-serving, this chapter will try to unpack dominant social and cultural constructions of masculinities in order to find justification for the protagonist's assumed villainy. This chapter will investigate the ideas and definitions of masculinity proposed by multiple authors and critics, such as Eugene Waith, Robin Headlam Wells, and Bruce Smith. This investigation will explore their ideas in the context of the patriarchal society that in itself is paradoxical in its demands of the male as Kahn postulates. In light of these theories and ideas, Macbeth's predicament is represented as a struggle to identify his manliness against the backdrop of a culture and politics that advocate violence over moderation. Such is an environment that is hostile in its measurement of male action in relation to the amount of the bloodshed in the battlefield while requiring absolute loyalty and obedience to authority in peace.

The view of man is summarized in Lady Macbeth's speech when she senses her husband's indecision to take the life of his king and gain the crown,

“When you durst do it, then you were a man;

And, to be more than what you were, you would

Be so much more the man.” (1.7.50-52)

In these few lines, true manhood is defined by Lady Macbeth as a territory without boundaries and regicide as the ultimate act of heroic manhood. Her translation of murder, violence and betrayal as the definitive qualities of manhood do not appear alien to both the culture of the play and the classic heroic ideals associated with manhood. Macbeth's heroism becomes exemplary in the battlefield and his loyalty uncontested. This image drawn of Macbeth at the beginning of the play is not far removed from that of male epic heroes, such as Achilles and Aeneas, whose actions are inspirational not just for their justice and nobility, but also for their fierceness, barbarity and “vindictive brutality” (Wells 2). Macbeth is the kind of warrior that Waith would identify as the Herculean hero in terms of his power and desire to transgress normal limits, the hero whose heroic deeds illustrate contrasts: benevolence and criminality, quests and betrayals, victory over evil and also murder of the innocent (Waith 16). These strange combinations are exclusive of great warriors, ones who may depart from the normative standards of morality in the society in which they live, yet maintain admiration for their uniqueness of character and greatness of action. A male hero as such becomes “worthy” in this paradoxical definition and so does Macbeth whose character and actions embody the same contradictions. The Herculean hero's “special morality” (Waith 16), allows the worthy hero to transgress acknowledged political and ethical boundaries based on the notion advocated by cultural pluralists that “there can be no certainties in ethical and political questions, no overarching truth, no universal

panacea” (Wells 142). Accordingly, Macbeth’s transgressions should not be condemned as unethical because they are performed in a culture that is already contaminated by military values and under a system that sanctions violence to conquer the enemy.

A similar notion is confirmed by the Italian poet of the sixteenth century, Torquato Tasso, who defines heroes as extraordinary men who defy conventional morality. He argues that there is a difference between moral virtue and heroic virtue with the latter being a “greatness that defies description” (Wells 2). It is undeniable that Macbeth combines both virtues in their essence with his initial introduction in the play. His moral virtue is demonstrated in his moral obligation towards king and kingdom subduing enemies and traitors and his heroic virtue is manifest in his unsurpassed valor. If one or both virtues define manhood then Macbeth embodies an ideal masculinity at least during his introduction in the play. His later murders can be suitably justified because they too follow unconventional morality. These two similar views qualify Macbeth as a hero for his extraordinary qualities and defend his actions against what critics may call his amorality or immorality.

The Renaissance too defines heroism in a similarly interesting way. A Renaissance hero's actions are usually associated with qualities borrowed from classical epic, medieval chivalry and Italian realpolitik (Wells 2). Added to these is the quality of ambition which is a double-edged sword in that it could be disruptive to the political stability of a state (Lowrance 835). Francis Bacon further argues that when ambition is associated with choler, the Galenic humor related to anger, ambition becomes both a virtue and a vice:

“Ambition is like choler; which is an humor that maketh men active, earnest, full of alacrity, and stirring, if it be not stopped. But if it be stopped, and cannot have his way, it becometh adust, and thereby malign and venomous. So ambitious men,

if they find the way open for their rising, and still get forward, they are rather busy than dangerous; but if they be checked in their desires, they become secretly discontent, and look upon men and matters with an evil eye, and are best pleased, when things go backward; which is the worst property in a servant of a prince, or state” (Bacon, “Essays, Civil and Moral”).

The heroic image is thus built up at the beginning of the play with the introduction of Macbeth, the war hero who disdains Fortune and slices Macdonwald, "the rebel's whore", from the “nave to th’ chops” like “valor’s minion”. Like a shipwrecking storm and direful thunder he then compels the Norwegian lord to surrender. As brutal as the murder appears, Macbeth conforms to a heroic image that is applauded by the Scottish warrior culture of the play where the more blood is shed, the more “manly” and heroic the warrior is. The same notion recurs when Siward learns from Ross that his son has “paid a soldier’s debt” (5.8.39-40) and died a man; he is not shown to grieve his son’s loss, but is shown to be more concerned with the location of his son’s wounds. “Had he his hurts before?” (5.8.47), asks Siward and when Ross responds in the affirmative, Siward pronounces his son God’s soldier and adds that if he had more sons he would not wish them a more honorable death; this, for Siward, is the heroic death worthy of heroic manhood.

In Macbeth’s Scotland “violent aggression, so long as it is sanctioned by the political order, is approved behavior only for men” (Kahn 155). Thus King Duncan’s praise of Macbeth as, “valiant cousin" and" worthy gentleman” for his savage slaughter of Macdonwald are not at odds with the Scots’ customs that connect honor and titles to murder and violence. One fundamental question arises here: How can a political order that advocates violence restrain violence? Duncan uses military action to quell an uprising against his reign using Macbeth as a

weapon of war and conversely expects him to remain loyal. Similarly, when he becomes king, Macbeth uses his sword to defend his kingdom and does exactly the same to secure his throne. Moreover, the former thane of Cawdor, who is accused of treason and betrayal, was once another loyal subject himself; aided by foreign powers, Cawdor is seen turning against his king, a pattern that seems to repeat itself in the actions of Cawdor, Macbeth and later Macduff. Paradoxically, Duncan, the king of Scotland and the leader of all armies, who should be a representative of this same culture, lacks any of these violent or heroic qualities. He is instead described as innocent, meek, and kind – qualities that do not place him as “man” in the same violent culture.

The ethical questions that Macbeth’s actions raise are debatable. Proser has argued that Macbeth has no morally valid reason for killing Duncan, yet there are many reservations over Duncan's worthiness as king. It could be argued for example, that Duncan is a weakling who cannot establish his hold on his kingdom and his reign reflects dissatisfaction and political unrest. He needs Macbeth’s military violence to fortify his rule and instead of rewarding Macbeth for his valor by pronouncing him heir to the throne, he chooses his son Malcolm in a self-serving move that violates the basic Scottish principles of royal succession. The notions of right and wrong, good and evil which reflect the human value system are fluid, never clear cut and many have made them seem “confused, contingent, mutually contradictory, disingenuously partial and self- serving, or simply in conflict with other values and intuitions” (Moschovakis 46). Macbeth’s initial resistance to his wife’s entreaty of “to be so much more the man” and his hesitation to accept what he believes may place him beyond the boundaries of “goodness” illustrate a moral and ethical dimension to his character. This solemn consideration for what is right or wrong is clearly seen after Macbeth’s first encounter with the witches and his anxiety over the “horrid image” of Duncan’s murder, which seems to unfix his hair and motivates his

decision to leave the matter of becoming king to fate. He declares “If chance will have me king, why, chance may crown me without my stir” (1.3.145-146). Later on when Lady Macbeth receives the happy tidings her husband sends her of the witches’ prophecies, she remains uncertain he would act to fulfill them because she believes he is too “full of the milk of human kindness” to pursue his ambition (1.5.13). Although some critics may view Lady Macbeth’s suspicion of her husband’s capabilities and contempt for his kindness as manifestations of a “soft” nature on his part, her words also undeniably tell of a man who has moral values despite his warring, bloody acts at the beginning. In her speech, she privately exposes his vulnerability and admits to a side of the warrior that is deeply hidden and known only to her: his humanity.

When she suggests murder, Macbeth’s initial response is dismissal, “We will speak further,” (1.6.67) and later rejection, “We will proceed no further in this business” (1.7.32). These dismissals all resonate with Macbeth’s “My thought, whose murder is yet but fantastical, shakes so my single state of man” (1.3.40-141), where Macbeth not only confesses his weakness, but also a human aspect that was not apparent in his bloody actions at war. Adamant, therefore, that he will not take action, Lady Macbeth vehemently invokes the evil spirits to “unsex” her and fill her with cruelty from crown to toe to be able to supplement her husband with the essential evil required to perform the murder. Believing in her power over him, she is certain she will successfully pour her poison in his ears and change his mind in favor of her plan. However, when she later sees his hesitation again just before the murder takes place, she accuses him of cowardice, lack of ambition and his hopes as “green and pale” (1.7.39). These accusations which threaten his manly self-image will be instrumental in manipulating Macbeth's decision, forcing him to fulfill what she believes is their shared vision. Thus, reduced to the status of a “boy” after having heroically achieved his manhood at battle, Macbeth decides to kill his king, lay aside

whatever moral codes he has fervently espoused and abdicate his humanity to reclaim his manhood.

There is no doubt Lady Macbeth's taunting words play a significant role in transporting Macbeth into the abyss that eventually leads to his tragic fall. Her taunts challenge not just his resolve to pursue his ambition and what he was promised by the witches, but also his capacity as a man to confirm his manliness. Her definition of manhood as a territory without bounds, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, versus her husband's reasoning that he would dare do all that makes him a man illustrate the opposing views of manhood that the play explores at its very core, a contradictory world where fair is foul and foul is fair. Lady Macbeth's appeal to her husband raises the essential question of what constitutes manliness. Instead of providing a direct answer, Shakespeare introduces a spectrum of "manliness" similar to Macbeth's "catalogue of men" in his discussion with the murderers, "In the catalogue ye go for men, As hounds and greyhounds, mongrels, spaniels, curs, Sloughs, water-rugs, and demi-wolves" (3.1.93-95). Shakespeare provides valid justification for these varied but conflicting definitions through the words and actions of key characters, particularly Macbeth who gains the empathy of the reader. As a matter of fact, the play offers little in response to what really constitutes manliness and therefore creates a sense of confusion as to whether *Macbeth* is an attack on or a defense of manhood- primarily through the character of Macbeth himself.

Macbeth belongs to a patriarchal society where men are given control of and supremacy over women as is the case with all patriarchal societies. However, patriarchy paradoxically makes men "dependent on women indirectly and covertly for the validation of their manhood" (Kahn 17). Like every man, Macbeth needs his wife to look up to him as an authoritative figure and treat him as her superior, but his lack of decisiveness makes him feel inferior to her. The

mighty Macbeth appears like a fragile and passive man in the face of his female mentor. This "valor's minion", who has fought heroically for king and kingdom will be an object of contempt if he does not show a similar firmness of purpose. Being so alarmed by his feeling of emasculation yet enchanted by his all too powerful wife, Macbeth professes, "Bring forth men-children only" (1.7.73). He identifies in his wife a strength that removes her from feminine nature and places her in a category of ruthlessness only peculiar to men. Again, that masculine image of his wife vis-a-vis his own faltering masculinity drives him to unwise decisions. It is only natural that he feels threatened and decides to quickly take whatever action to preserve his self-image.

After Macbeth kills Duncan and becomes king, he is haunted by feelings of guilt that he cannot escape. His anxiety peaks when he later realizes that he needs to secure his position against his adversaries (Proser 72). Killing Duncan affirms his manhood, and so does killing all those who threaten the safety of his position. His masculine autonomy and heroic conception of himself will never be complete until Banquo, with his unfaltering loyalty and integrity is removed from the scene. The decision he takes to have Banquo killed, one that is taken without the knowledge and consultation of his wife, empowers him once again. He thus proves himself bold and resolute becoming "so much more the man" that Lady Macbeth has earlier challenged him to be. When the murderers return with the news that Fleance escapes, Macbeth's wholesomeness crumbles and he becomes overpowered by a sense of fear and emasculation. He feels "cabined, cribbed, confined," (3.4.24) after he has felt himself "Perfect/Whole as the marble, founded as the rock" (3.4.21-22).

A male is expected to provide, defend and propagate. (Smith 2) The classic ideal associated with manhood in patriarchal society not only stipulates physical prowess, valor, strength, bloodiness but also the ability to procreate. Sterility takes away from a man's manhood

and weakens his self- image and if fatherhood is “the crown of manhood” (Kahn 175), Macbeth’s crown is fruitless because he has no heirs. According to Kahn, all Macbeth breeds is murders in contrast to his rivals, Duncan, Banquo, Macduff and Siward who are fruitful and have their own seeds that will preserve the natural and social order. On Macbeth’s second visit to the witches, they show him a line of kings stretching out ‘to th’ crack of doom,”(4.1.117) ending with one holding a mirror to reflect a never ending line of kings descended from Banquo, an everlasting reminder of Macbeth’s sterility and impotence. In another instance Macduff cries out “He has no children,” (4.3.217) when he learns of Macbeth’s murder of his children implying the heartlessness of the murder and the murderer and the impossibility of delivering justice through revenge because Macbeth has no children and thus can have no taste of the pain of losing a child. With the same vengeance, Macbeth hires murderers to have Fleance, Banquo’s son, killed in an attempt to impede Banquo’s descendants from accessing the throne as the witches had predicted. Though the attempt turns unsuccessful because Fleance manages to escape, the attempt itself illustrates a tragic desire on the part of Macbeth to avenge his sterility. His impotence and lack of wholesomeness become the blind impetus that prompts him to act against those who have what he does not.

Macbeth’s vulnerability to his wife and his failure to defend his own conceptions of manliness drive him towards more blood and violence thinking this would bring him peace and wholesomeness. Unfortunately, this does not happen and Macbeth’s manhood is shaken again by the appearance of Banquo’s ghost during the banquet. His manly courage disappears when he finds himself face to face with a victim he killed in cold blood. In refusing to look at Banquo’s ghost, Macbeth attempts to escape a confrontation not only with a deed he realizes is horrid, but also with what the murder itself represents: lack of manliness. The frenzy and hysteria that

capture Macbeth as a result are criticized by his wife who shamefully and covertly questions his manhood, “Are you a man?”(3.4.56-57) and he responds by “Ay, and a bold one, that dare look on that which might appall the Devil” (3.4.58-59). She once again defines manhood as “unblinking resolution, untouched by pity or fear” (Kahn 181), and he defines it as boldness to face his evil doing.

Lady Macbeth’s shame of her husband springs from her realization that her evil soliciting and constant nurturing have dramatically failed to turn him into a remorseless and fearless man. In her earlier “unsex” me speech, she has explicitly pleaded that her milk be turned to gall blocking all access to remorse and if Macbeth is linked to her as a dependent child feeding from the mother then her power as well as his are flawed once Macbeth succumbs to his fears. For Macbeth, his shame resides in his wife’s disdain at his fear which resurrects his ever existing but subdued self-dissatisfaction. He feels that the strength, power and security he has established for himself have never belonged to him, but to the woman who made him (Kahn 152). When Banquo’s ghost presents itself to Macbeth, Macbeth recognizes a weakness that he thought himself rid of when he killed Duncan. In order to bring himself to a more comforting view of his own courage, he challenges the ghost to a physical combat. He'd rather invest his physical strength using the sword than fight an imaginary product of his guilty mind. When the ghost disappears momentarily, he regains his wholesomeness and exclaims, “Why, so, being gone/ I am a man again” (3.4.108-109).

Renaissance politics also plays a significant role in the writing of *Macbeth* and in giving new definitions to the notion of manhood. Peacefulness rather than bloody aggression has become a more prominent notion associated with manliness, mainly due to King James's pacifistic tendencies (Wells 27). Thus, Shakespeare's motive in writing the character of Macbeth

the way he did is not born out of an intellectual vacuum; on the contrary, it ought to be viewed as an attempt to appease his king. The fact that Shakespeare chooses to borrow ideas from Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Ireland* (1587), *Macbeth*'s main narrative source, and ignores others to conform to a certain portrayal of Macbeth is indeed a political manipulation (Moschovakis 96). For example, in Holinshed, Macbeth is Duncan's cousin and holds a strong claim to the throne while Banquo is not as guiltless of Duncan's murder as Shakespeare claimed in his play. That Shakespeare intentionally chooses to omit those facts reflects negatively on the character of Macbeth, eventually turning him into a tyrannical and loathsome figure when he is originally not. In his treatise, *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies*, James himself argues that tyrannical rulers are God's punishment to sinful people and that rebellion against them is unlawful and unjustifiable (Wells 118). If Shakespeare had intended to portray Scotland as a kingdom of sinful people deserving of a tyrant like Macbeth, there is no justification for the murder of Macbeth at the hands of Malcolm and Macduff at the end. What they did, in James's consideration, is immoral and unacceptable. This argument, thus, paradoxically places Macbeth as both hero and villain.

The unresolved issues regarding Macbeth's goodness or evil, invites dualistic interpretation of *Macbeth*. Although many theatrical representations have criticized Macbeth as a character, several others have argued in his favor. For example, David Garrick's *Macbeth* (1744-1768) has presented Macbeth in the light of the 18th century sensibility, "quickness and acuteness of apprehension or feeling" (Smith 150). Garrick portrayed Macbeth as a model of high morality who is immediately struck by a sense of guilt once he yields to his wife's provocations and not a remorseless tyrant who is blood thirsty for power. For Garrick, Macbeth is an imperfect hero deserving of pity because of his humanity. Had it not been for Lady

Macbeth's evil intentions, Macbeth could have lived as a paragon of virtue in his loyalty to his king. It is the dark influence of the ambitious evil wife that drives him to his doom. Added to that is Roman Polanski's film version of the play (1971) which victimizes Macbeth as a product of a corrupt society and not as a "moral agent" (Smith 150), a tragic figure who is a "typical product of a brutalized and brutalizing society" (Moschovakis 33). Polanski also questions in his film the soundness of human perceptions and decisions in a world where appearances are deceptive and where "Nothing is but what is not" (1.3.142-143).

Chapter 2

Masculinity and Psychoanalysis

Since gender is a social construct and society dictates certain ideals that males and females have to ascribe to and follow, failure to comply with these images often leads to the physical and psychological destruction of these individuals. It is true we gain understanding and knowledge of how individuals act from an understanding of the complex dynamics of society, but equally important is trying to comprehend these social complexities and connect them to the construction and operation of the human psyche. The case of Macbeth too, must not only be decoded in terms of the social influences surrounding him, but also in terms of the psychological build- up borne out of these social pressures. Through psychoanalysis this understanding is made possible because psychoanalysis plunges deep into the human psyche from early childhood to exhume both pleasant and unpleasant experiences that explain paradoxical human behavior and motivation. Through probing the unconscious- what Freud called "The hidden, worldless dimension"(Minsky 3), or in simpler terms, the key that triggers human action- where early and later hidden pains and desires are repressed- much of Macbeth's irrational behavior can be explained. Although Shakespeare does not introduce his readers to Macbeth's childhood, it is nevertheless crucial to connect his adult life to his early childhood experiences to gain a better understanding of his actions and thought processes. Like Freud, Shakespeare explores the crisis of Macbeth's identity, one that is shaped by the expressed and hidden emotions of earlier life and defined by patriarchal society. Labeling Macbeth as a "tragic hero" conveys the paradoxical nature of the play. In the eyes of the beholder lies a dualistic view of the protagonist as a hero and villain simultaneously. Shakespeare's speculations over social and cultural values become more comprehensible when clinically inspected in terms of the role that the unconscious plays in

shaping these characters. Only then, would a large part of the reader's resentment against these hero/villain characters, subside.

Macbeth qualifies for the hero/villain, a character too controversial to label as one without the other. His heroism at war is uncontested, and his villainy is not self-made but prompted by others. The plotline of *Macbeth* does not simply investigate or explore the politics of creating a tyrant king who betrays the trusting head of state and kills him to fulfill a prophecy. It probes deeper into studying the psychological dimension with all the conflicts and implications that eventually lead to the protagonist's destruction. Trapped in what Freud called the Oedipal stage (Adelman 130) and struggling to break free from the maternal malevolence represented by his wife and the witches, Macbeth re-experiences the early traumatic and neurotic symptoms characteristic of that phase: anxiety, repression, self disguise and guilt. Through these symptoms, it is easy to catch a glimpse of the workings of Macbeth's unconscious and the dynamics of his inner psyche and understand the reasons that prompted him to villainy so that when he meets his end at the conclusion of the play, he still gains sympathy as a victim of this "worldless dimension" rather than antipathy as a common assassin. His is a quest "to be", a failed, unconscious struggle to acquire what he does not possess to satisfy his ego and those around him. Psychoanalysis posits that an "unconscious sense of lack of being is transferred into desire or a want to be" (Minsky 4). Thus, Macbeth's tragic flaw in a sense is not only his excessive ambition as much as it is an unconscious desire to defend and possibly re-construct a masculine identity, to be "the man" he was made to feel that he wasn't. His anxiety about his manhood only surfaced with his wife's remonstrations revealing deeply rooted insecurities that could be traced back to his childhood experiences. Macbeth's actions do not emanate from groundless delusions, but rather from valid and significant origins all harvested during childhood and surfacing only

when he is exposed to his wife's taunts. Though the unconscious is formed at childhood out of desires and losses- as Freud postulated- it influences us without our being aware of it regardless of the passage of time. Because it is a dimension of identity outside our conscious awareness, we rarely recognize it without clinical help (Minsky 3).

Prior to delving into the dynamics of the conscious and the unconscious which can be used to explain much of Macbeth's and Lady Macbeth's motivations and behaviors, it is important to point out two important assumptions of the psychoanalytic theory. The first is that human mental development has three symbolic structures: the Id which defines the basic human drives of which sexuality is the most important; the ego, our more rational aspect or the organizer of our mental life and the superego which he identifies as our conscience. What Freud repeatedly stresses is the belief that identity is inseparable from our own sexuality and that our erogenous zones determine who we are and what we do. This theory will be further discussed later in connection to what Freud called "Castration Complex" and "Penis Envy". The second assumption is that all humans are bisexual and during their developmental years, females tend to suppress their masculinity and males their femininity under the pressures society has placed on them, yet neither completely manages to achieve that. In his three essays on the theory of sexuality, Freud stated, that all individuals are born with traces of the apparatus of the opposite sex and through the course of evolution this bisexuality is modified into a unisexual one (Gay 244). Minsky quotes Freud in his 1925 writings to further explain the male/female conundrum: "All individuals, as a result of their bisexual disposition and of cross-inheritance, combine in themselves both masculine and feminine characteristics, so that pure masculinity and femininity remain theoretical constructions of uncertain content" (63-64). Regardless of what is being suppressed or when it is suppressed, the traces of the apparatus of the other sex always remain

manifest, carrying residue into adult life and ultimately materialize when a situation calls for them. In extreme cases, the resulting individual suffers from degrees of sexual confusion because of failure to conform to cultural expectations (Minsky 64). Many males have to relinquish their emotional side, a side peculiar to the female, to measure up to the cultural ideal of "masculinity". How often a mother retorts to a whiny son telling him not to cry like a little girl is an example of such cultural inhibitions. If as such, "masculinity" and "femininity" coexist in one body they, therefore, cannot be explained apart from each other because one defines the other and as Freud argues, the genitals of the individuals combine the characteristics of both the males and the females (Gay 243). In the light of this theory, the characters of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, who demonstrate a peculiar crossing over from one state to the other, become comprehensible.

Freud's theory also makes two assumptions regarding identity. The first is that identity is divided into two major separate dimensions, the conscious and the unconscious. He defines the conscious as our knowledge of ourselves or reality and the unconscious as the storage of unpleasant experiences that need to be repressed (Minsky 26). Repression, the displacement of conscious and painful feelings to the unconscious, is a defense mechanism developed in early childhood for the purpose of self- preservation against threats imposed by the external world. The second assumption is that identity is largely shaped by the combined work of the unconscious and complex social and cultural values (Minsky 4); as a result, identity is always divided and constantly threatened by the presence of this hidden, rebellious unconscious (Minsky 20) that resembles a dormant volcano ready to erupt at any moment.

According to Freud's essay *The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex*, a child's first experiences of repression - whether male or female- take place in the phallic stage of development (Gay 664). The focus of the discussion here will be on the male child - to explain

the adult Macbeth-and then the female child later on- to explain the adult Lady Macbeth- as a sort of comparison to facilitate the understanding of the dynamics of identity. As Kahn argues, Macbeth re-lives the original separation process and is exposed to similar anxieties produced by this early separation. He looks up to his wife like a child who looks up to an overpowering mother in psychoanalytic terms. Her words are the nourishment that he needs to satisfy his Id and with her directions he learns to muster his strength to deal with the dangers of the external world. Through this identification with her, he creates an image of himself and he copies the mother who dashes her baby's brains out to reach her objective following in her footsteps. However, this identification with her has to come to an end because identifying with a woman diminishes his sense of masculinity. It becomes necessary for him then to separate from her and devise his own plans to prove his own identity, as clearly seen in his plotting of Banquo's murder. This same scenario resonates with how psychoanalysis explains the developmental stages of all humans. During early childhood years, children of both sexes are said to develop an unconscious sexual attachment and desire for the mother- the source of their nourishment and satisfaction (Craib 43). It is through the mother figure that the child identifies his/her existence and becomes completely dependent on the mother to learn about the physical world around him/her. This dependency on the mother exists not only because she is the source of nourishment and love, but also because it is through the unity with her that the child develops what Freud calls "Omnipotence ", an unshaken feeling of security, thinking that both the mother and himself constitute one body (Kahn 4). Around the second month, comes what Freud calls the "Peripheral rind of the ego" where the baby's senses force it to recognize that it and the mother are not one as previously perceived, thus prompting the baby to take his first steps towards identity formation (Kahn 4). D.W Winnicott describes the relationship of the child to the mother using the "mirror

image". He posits that when the mother looks at the child, touches it or feeds it, she gives it back an image of itself. By playing with the baby, the mother is also said to transfer the emotions that the baby needs to gain control of the actual world surrounding it as a result enabling it to shift from the breast identification to a more selective identification where the baby can imitate her and at the same time be itself (Kahn 4-5).

"The loving mother teaches her child to walk alone.....And yet she does more. Her face beckons like a reward, an encouragement. Thus, the child walks alone with his eyes fixed on his mother's face, not on the difficulties in his way. He supports himself by the arms that do not hold him and constantly strives towards the refuge in his mother's embrace, little suspecting that in the very same moment that he is emphasizing his need of her, he is proving that he can do without her, because he is walking alone."

Mahler Quoted in Kahn, p 7 from *Man's Estate*.

To the child-like Macbeth, Lady Macbeth resembles that loving mother who introduces her child to the external world, to manhood and independence. In his deluded mind, he sees her as exemplary in her love, care and resoluteness and strives to gain the rewards that she silently promises him if he succeeds, but at the same time is always threatened by her rage if he fails. If he falters, he is confident she will be the arms that will embrace and support him He does not realize that his attempt of the symbolic "walking alone" marks his independence from her. Such is the relationship between the child and the mother, one that starts with fixation and then naturally shifts to independence. That fixation on the mother never completely leaves the child even after the child has separated from the mother and has achieved independence; his need for her looms in the background of his psyche and if in excess, it is said the child fails to secure his masculine identity and forever remains in bondage to women (Strachey 48). Regardless of the

power or status he comes to later in life, any man is most likely to feel anxious when his masculinity is called to question by a female. Thus when Lady Macbeth expresses her scorn at his hesitation to kill Duncan and represents herself as the mother who dashes out the brains of her baby to fulfill a promise, he immediately places himself in comparison to her strength and finds his masculinity lacking in that respect; he loses that identification with her from which he has gained omnipotence. The fact that he sees himself dependent on a woman to confirm his identity parallels a "psychic retreat to the past" (Favila 3). He regresses to the child status and relives the original crisis of his masculine identity, experiencing the same old traumatic feelings. As painful as the separation from her is, it becomes necessary if Macbeth is intent on establishing and developing his identity. Without that separation, the child-like Macbeth loses focus of his sexual identity as a man (Kahn 4). It is also worth noting that the boy's separation from the mother is not without emotional consequences. Alone without her help, the boy usually finds himself trapped in a reality that he finds difficult to cope with. As a result, his actions may become destructive to himself and others. It is easy therefore to understand the psychological challenges that Macbeth faces when confronted by his wife's taunts of his unmanliness and consequently his bad decisions to pursue further murders without her knowledge in a trial to prove his potency as a man. His situation becomes paradoxical because in her presence he becomes both powerful and powerless. Like a child hanging on to the mother, she gives him the strength to survive, but her presence also takes away from him manliness because it is a reminder of his lacking masculine identity. His growing anxiety over her words not only debases him as a warrior, but also as a man re-living his original fear of castration. Macbeth, the killer of kings, must not only be viewed as such, but also as a victim of his own subconscious, a dynamic that he has little control over.

In psychoanalysis, the child's desire or relationship to the mother is exposed to the threat of the father to whom the mother pledges full allegiance. The male child develops, as a result, a novel array of feelings such as resentment, anxiety and fear mainly directed at the father as a competitor and is consequently overwhelmed by a fear of castration that he initially escapes by abandoning the mother and allying himself with the father in the hope that in the future he will find a substitute female other than the mother for a wife or companion. By choosing to do so, it is said the boy develops his first masculine characteristics and identifies himself as a man. That, however, does not mean the child completely abandons the attachment to the mother or the fear of castration from the father; on the contrary, what Freud suggests is that the child represses these desires and fears temporarily in that hidden compartment called the unconscious. What resides in the boy's unconscious is a feeling of antagonism against the father and a hidden desire to get rid of him. Psychoanalysis presumes that when our desires are renounced and cannot be immediately gratified, a sense of frustration ensues that culminates into aggression (Craib 20). It is, therefore, during those early years that the male child develops a sense of hostility and aggression that was not present before and that was created by these unconscious anxieties and desires. In *The Ego and the Id* (1923), Freud connects aggression with the superego which explains to a large extent the superego's capacity for aggression in the form of guilt that is also repressed to allow for adequate survival but remains throbbing in the background (Minsky 81). Macbeth's murder of Duncan for example, could be explained as a representation of his hatred of the castrating father- like authority in psychoanalytic terms.

Duncan symbolically represents the primeval castrating father in Freud's theory of the Primal Horde in *Totem and Taboo* (1913). His hold on the kingdom is weakening and his position as the strongest of the males is contested since rivalries are threatening his crown. The

sons, in this case the Thane of Cawdor and the traitor Macdonwald, have risen against him and his throne needs to be replaced by a stronger male. Macbeth, the strongest of the sons, disposes of him and ascends the throne but not without a feeling of guilt that he needs to repress to continue with his ambition. With the murder of Banquo and the failed attempt to kill Macduff, the son that killed the father turns into a father who kills his sons to secure his position and guarantee that no other son will overthrow him. Yet, the deeds do not pass without a feeling of guilt and in defense of his well being, these feelings need to be repressed and his conscience to be silenced. He develops an interior pressure towards self disguise, wanting darkness to mask his guilt as if by not seeing, he would put his heinous deeds outside his conscious awareness. He hires murderers to dispose of Banquo and Macduff instead of carrying out the murders himself to avoid a revival of the same feeling of guilt initiating with Duncan's murder, trying as much as possible to alienate himself from the responsibility of their deaths.

According to psychoanalysis, the young female passes through somewhat similar phases with the detachment from the mother. Freud insists that for a girl to achieve femininity a huge struggle has to take place and he concludes that femininity is rarely completely achieved (Minsky 49). However, the girl's fears are not as grave as those of the boy and hers become more of an anxiety over what she discovers herself and her mother lacking: the phallus. The girl, as a result develops a complex that Freud calls Penis envy. A sense of inferiority- similar to the feeling of castration in the males- strikes the young girl and as a result she either develops into a submissive woman totally lacking in self confidence or one who seeks dominance over the males through seduction. Lady Macbeth conforms to the latter category of women. She plays the role of the seductive mother feeding Macbeth "intoxicating dreams of glory" (Holland 225). She turns him into her fool and manipulates him to fulfill her social and political ambition, giving her the

power that was stolen away from her as a child. The fact that Lady Macbeth desires to excise her femininity turning herself to half man is an attempt on her side to transcend her femininity through men, unleashing all the masculine energy repressed in her since childhood. This however cannot be done except through a male medium because of cultural inhibitions and so Macbeth becomes her tool for self- fulfillment.

Although Freud rejected the initial assumption that men are active and women passive, the terms have been nonetheless ascribed to femininity and masculinity. Men are viewed as active not only because of the social roles imposed on them as breadwinners and women as passive because they are the caretakers, but also because of their biological set up. The phallic is regarded as active while the vagina is regarded as passive. Any disturbance in this common norm creates an anomalous being that is eventually doomed for destruction. Macbeth demonstrates both active and passive qualities throughout the play; in other words he demonstrates both the male and the female attitude confirming Freud's theory of bisexuality. His activity and passivity are seen in the scenes of murder. In the battlefield, his activity reigns supreme at harvesting the lives of his enemies and later in his final confrontation with Macduff. However, the fact that he avoids killing Banquo, Fleance and the Macduff family himself and hires murderers to do so demonstrate passivity on his side. This passivity might be interpreted as a desire to disengage from the guilt of committing more murderous acts. Macbeth also portrays the "passive model" when it comes to his decision to kill Duncan, and it is Lady Macbeth who appears the more active in nature prompting him to do the act. Her drives appear the more masculine as a result while his are less so. According to Lacan, men have a privileged status within culture and to be like a woman whether in public or personal life, is considered as a downgrading in social and sexual status. The situation is different for a woman, though, because by becoming more

masculine - that is having access to power and activity, a woman is promoted in her social status but downgraded in sexual terms being the masculine woman and receives less appeal from society (Minsky 18).

In the character of Macbeth, we see intimation of both good and evil. The fact that he suffers an inner moral conflict over the murders he commits is enough evidence that he is inherently good, but the destructive influence that his wife has on him prompts him to moral decrepitude and ultimately self destruction. This influence that his wife has on him would not have been made possible had she not struck a responsive chord in his nature: his need to assert his manhood and his desire to maintain her love for him. When she threatens withdrawal of her affection if he fails to comply, he regresses to a child status and becomes engulfed with the fear of abandonment. Caught in the crossfire of conflicting emotions, he falls prey to his fear of self-contempt and realizes, as his wife previously convinced him, that whether he kills Duncan or not, he is bound to suffer the rest of his life. If he kills Duncan, he will lose his self-respect for violating a moral and ethical code and ultimately undergo self-hate, but not killing him will deny him the throne that was promised to him and he will ever after live with self-contempt. He is damned either ways and he cannot escape.

Chapter 3

Reliving the Infantile

Infantile experience, whether oedipal or pre-oedipal explains much of the actions in *Macbeth*. A psychoanalytic reading of the play focuses on a combination of the oedipal complex: the father/son struggle between male characters and the mother/infant matrix in the form of maternal malevolence exemplified by Lady Macbeth and the witches against the infantile Macbeth (Favila 2). Five major "scenic" locations in *Macbeth* outline the interplay between both ideas. The first of these significant locations is that of the battlefield at the beginning of the play and the captain's complex portrayal of Macbeth's valor and victory.

Doubtful it stood,
As two spent swimmers that do cling together
And choke their art. The merciless Macdonwald—
Worthy to be a rebel, for to that
The multiplying villanies of nature
Do swarm upon him—from the Western Isles
Of kerns and gallowglassesis supplied;
And Fortune, on his damnèd quarrel smiling,
Showed like a rebel's whore. But all's too weak;
For brave Macbeth—well he deserves that name—
Disdaining fortune, with his brandished steel,
Which smoked with bloody execution,
Like valor's minion carved out his passage
Till he faced the slave;

Which ne'er shook hands, nor bade farewell to him
Till he unseamed him from the navel to th' chops,
And fixed his head upon our battlements.

(1.2.7-23)

Received as a second hand account, the battle seems like a demonstration of phallic power pitted against the threat of castration. Adelman purports that the battle between Macbeth and Macdonwald which on the surface appears like the fight between good and evil, loyal and disloyal subjects in the realm of Scotland is oddly translated into a battle of male against female, action against passivity and strength against weakness. Although Macdonwald is described as Macbeth's equal in strength, "Doubtful it stood/ As two spent swimmers that do cling together/And choke their art", Macbeth's superiority in aggression and valor - typical male characteristics that denote male autonomy- surpasses Macdonwald's "mercilessness" and "multiplying villainies"- a more feminized image denoting lack of autonomy. Macbeth representing the "son" seeks not only to please Duncan "the father", but also to establish a bloody rebirth. His unparalleled aggression resembles male sexual aggression against a passive female victim in a metaphorical sense (Adelman 142). With his "brandished steel" sword- a symbol of the phallic- Macbeth performs his own bloody re- birth by striking the body of Macdonwald now associated with the female- in the reference to Fortune- by cutting him from the navel to the chops as a physician performing a caesarian section leaving behind the castrated body of his enemy (Adelman 142). Ultimately, the all male hero, Macbeth, physically conquers the body of Macdonwald by slaying him, and metaphorically defeating the female- like a rebel's whore. Thus, his victory and honor are established by markedly and aggressively separating himself from the tainted female, an act that prepares him for his new title "brave Macbeth". Being hence

all self-made, Macbeth becomes invulnerable because he has excised himself from any maternal origin. Lowrance further argues that the account of the battle with Macdonwald is structured around two classical concepts; one is Fortuna, which connotes fragility, passivity and possible failure of action versus Virtus which connotes fortitude and heroic action. The association of Macdonwald with Fortune taints Macdonwald with effeminacy as he relies on the female to fight and win. The account itself implies that Macdonwald's action is not his own since it is aided by Fortune, unlike Macbeth who depends solely on his "brandished steel sword" and disdains fortune in the process. Although some critics have argued that ascribing the phrase "valor's minion" to Macbeth reduces him to an effeminate figure because of the connotations of subordination associated with the word "minion", the use of the word "like" which precedes the phrase creates a simile that could be understood in connection with Macbeth's sword being described as a tool for Macbeth's valor. In Ross's account of Macbeth's battle with the king of Norway another sexual-symbolic conquest is recounted describing Macbeth as Bellona's bridegroom: Macbeth as the male in domination of Bellona, the female goddess of war. Similarly, this valor's minion and Bellona's bridegroom cannot be defeated by any ordinary man, but by one who is equally or metaphorically self-made. The witches, on Macbeth's last visit, inform him that he will never be harmed by man of woman born, in other words a man also not tainted by the female. Deceived by this prophecy and not realizing that the possibility that such a man like himself exists, he becomes blind of the eminent threat. Macduff himself turns out to be that man since he also was a product of a caesarian section, being himself "from his mother's womb/ Untimely ripped" (5.8.15-16), thus Macbeth's promised killer. In those two scenic locations, the initial battle scene with Macdonwald and the final battle scene with Macduff, the dissociation from the female is portrayed as site of strength following the traditional belief that

femininity is a condition of lack and contamination, to be female is to be castrated (Lenz. Greene. Neely 162).

Duncan's status as an ineffective king whose realm is infested with rebellions, betrayals and witchcraft is fertile ground for the emergence of all "unnatural" events. Before the actions of the play do start, we see the domination of evil through the presence of the witches whose gender is questionable. Women they are, yet they look like men with beards. The presence of the female, exemplified by the presence of the witches in the first scene demonstrates the catastrophic impact the female will have on the life of the protagonist. When Macbeth kills Duncan, he does not only engage in regicide, but symbolically engages in parricide as well. The killing of the "primal horde"- the father- opens up the door for further tragedy mostly empowering the mother to rule supreme in the absence of the father. Thus, fatherless, Macbeth becomes more vulnerable to the maternal influence exemplified by his wife and later on by the witches whose deceptive equivocations bring mayhem to the kingdom and disillusionment to Macbeth. Adelman states that it is ironic that Duncan himself is portrayed as the androgynous parent- carrying forward the traits of the father and the mother, the male and the female at the same time. He is the source of nurturance for all his subjects, "planting the children to his throne and making them grow" (Adelman 132), yet he appears as a passive character, sitting amidst his warriors awaiting the news of the battle without really being actively involved in the sword-bearing, deceived and manipulated by his courtiers. Macbeth's killing of Duncan, as Otto Rank explained in 1912, represents hatred of a father-like authority (Holland 219), but in the context of the androgynous parent, Macbeth not only rids himself of the father, but the mother as well.

The Banquet scene

Before and after the first murder, Macbeth's repressed remorse manifests itself through imaginary terrors. The voices that he hears "Sleep no more! Macbeth does murder sleep" (2.2. 39-40) and the dagger that he sees pointing him to Duncan's room and which he addresses as "dagger of the mind, a false creation, proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain," (2.1. 39-40) are all signs of a guilt-laden conscience. However, unlike Lady Macbeth who only prompts the first murder, he spills more blood to smother his fear of the future: the crown being over-taken from him by Banquo's sons. Otto Rank proposes that the ghost, like all Shakespeare's ghosts, stands for "persistence or immortality of infantile feelings about the father" (Holland 219). In this light, the presumed appearance of Banquo's ghost during the banquet is threatening to Macbeth on multiple levels. The fear the ghost elicits not only shakes his manhood, but also reminds him of his earlier murders of Duncan and Banquo himself. In Macbeth's fantasy, Banquo has returned to avenge both his own murder and that of Duncan's. If Macbeth's murder of Duncan falls under the psychoanalytic assumption that it is hatred and resentment of a father-like authority that prompts the murder, then within the same framework the ghost of Banquo becomes a symbolic representation of two murders not one: Duncan's and Banquo's. When Banquo's ghost occupies Macbeth's seat in the middle of the company during the banquet, the act itself becomes threatening to Macbeth not only because it is a reminder that it is Banquo's sons who will assume the throne of Scotland as the witches have prophesied, but also because by occupying the father's seat, Duncan's memory is brought forward. Macbeth has seized the place of the king/father and now that he is the king/father, Banquo the son, is threatening to seize Macbeth's place through the symbolic act of occupying his seat. For Macbeth, Banquo's return is also a reminder of Macbeth's impotence. He will never be the father that Banquo was simply because he cannot

father any children. In that sense, Banquo will always remain Macbeth's rival, whether dead or alive, always in mockery of Macbeth's deficiency. Although the appearance of the ghost occupies a present moment, it acts as a reminder of a terribly past deed and carries with it the fear of the future that so dominantly preoccupies Macbeth.

The Unsex me Speech

Two scenes portray two different sides of Lady Macbeth, one before the murder of Duncan takes place and the other after. In the the first, she demonstrates strength when she invokes the spirits of darkness to unsex her in an attempt to prepare herself to disarm her husband of "the milk of human kindness". In the second, she demonstrates utter weakness and vulnerability when she is sleepwalking. Frieda Mallinckrodt analyzes Lady Macbeth as a split personality. One side of her is charged with masculinity, exhibiting a strong hatred and resentment for the father, a tendency peculiar to men only as interpreted in psychoanalysis. This masculine energy can only find passage to the external world through a male medium, in this case her husband. The other side of her personality demonstrates a feminine and loving nature that is possibly perturbed by her sense of inability to have children with her husband. This feminine nature is clear in her tenderness and sometimes softness towards her husband. Before Duncan's murder her masculine side reigns supreme, but after the murder her femininity becomes so overwhelming that she falls ill with remorse (Holland 228).

In the Unsex me speech, Lady Macbeth is seen playing the role of the seductive mother to Macbeth in the potential absence of the father, Duncan. Holland argues that Lady Macbeth and the witches portray the evil feeding mothers. Both feed Macbeth "intoxicating dreams of glory" and comfortable in their nursing, he follows their wishes. The witches and Lady Macbeth both echo the superiority of female power, exemplified by the image of the mother, versus the

vulnerability of man, through the image of the child (Adelman 134). Lady Macbeth's invocation of the evil spirits - the same evil spirits that move the witches- connects them both and her desire to abandon her femininity in order to fortify herself in preparation to empower her husband is paralleled to the witches' questionable gender: "You should be women/ And yet your beards forbid me to interpret/ That you are" (1.3.45-47), as Banquo previously noted.

By summoning the evil spirits Lady Macbeth yearns to "undo her own bodily maternal functions":

Come you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here
And fill me, from the crown to the toe, top-full
Of direst cruelty! Make thick my blood;
Stop up th'access and passage to remorse,
That no compunctious visitings of Nature
Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
Th'effect and it! Come to my woman's breasts
And take my milk for gall, you murdering ministers.

(1.5.36-44)

In these lines, Lady Macbeth beseeches the forces of darkness to take away the very essence of her femininity by obstructing her reproductive passages. The milk that is associated with her motherhood, tenderness and therefore femininity which she implores to be changed to gall signifies the bitterness and cruelty that she needs to milk to her child husband to harden him up. This image explicitly connects Lady Macbeth and Macbeth to the nursing mother and her child.

The Sleepwalking Scene

From the center of the stage, the all male powerful female of the "Unsex me" speech who prompts her husband to commit the worst of crimes and backs out from committing the murder

herself at the last minute recognizing Duncan as the image of the father, Lady Macbeth shifts to the margin of existence and reveals the first signs to be witnessed of her femininity: her weakness and vulnerability. Her initial metaphorical unrestrained childish striving against the parent- Duncan- pathetically transforms to adult remorse after the murder of the parent (Holland 96). Her guilty ridden conscience is apparent in her soliloquy before the banquet:

Naught's had, all's spent,
Where our desire is got without content.
'Tis safer to be that which we destroy
Than by destruction dwell in doubled joy

(Macbeth 3.2.7-10)

At this specific moment, Lady Macbeth's remorse manifests itself in her description of how any delight of life has disappeared. The tone of desperation and weakness overwhelms the passage marking a unique transformation in the character of the mighty woman who has dramatically failed to unsex herself. Her status has been reduced to one of marginality and isolation like an outcast cut off from grace. Her guilty conscience seems to communicate its agony secretly in the solitude of her room and of her sleep. The incessant washing of the blood on her hands which she has been observed doing shows an obsessive compulsive urge to wash off her sense of guilt but to no avail and her half-sleeping mind recognizes that, "All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand" (5.1.40-41). The words she is heard uttering are an enumeration of the tragic murders committed beginning with the murder she prompted of Duncan, that of Banquo and finally of Lady Macduff which all recall a present memory of a past loss. In her sleep walking she becomes an object of pity speaking the silent pangs of conscience and although she carries a candle, no light can seem to penetrate the darkness of her soul. Like a ghost, she disappears from the center of events transfixed to the present memory of past horrors

(Lenz. Greene. Neely 249). Ironically, the woman who once thought "That memory, the warder of the brain, shall be a fume, and the receipt of reason A limbeck only" (1.7.66-68) can neither surmount her guilt nor enjoy peaceful sleep, threatened by the bloody moments of the past that haunt her present. Like a mother frantic over her "pale", sick child during the dead of the night, Lady Macbeth is looking for Macbeth and prompting him to put on his nightgown and go to sleep. Her holding the candle reinforces the idea that like a mother she is watching her son go to sleep adopting the tone of the parent in her utterances. Unlike her husband whose guilty conscience goes public as seen dramatically in his frenzy during the banquet with the appearance of Banquo's ghost, Lady Macbeth's guilty conscience communicates itself privately in the confines of her chambers and in her sleep. Only in this scene do we identify with Lady Macbeth as a woman when she is overwhelmed with weakness and illness. The resoluteness and boldness of her character and tongue have vanished and she becomes victim to the images of the horrid past. Her earlier trials at "unsexing" have utterly failed and so did her identification with male strength. Isador Coriat analyzes her sleepwalking and calls it "monoideic somnambulism", a mental condition where definite, repetitive patterns of behavior resulting from repression of memories takes place only during sleep. In a somnambulist attack, Coriat argues, all of the abnormal fixed ideas and repressed memories that have gained intensity come to the surface. During such episodes, adds Holland, the mind has a life of its own isolating certain ideas from the main stream of consciousness; when the attack is over, the subject resumes his/her normal personality yet a gap in consciousness is created (220); Her early invocation to make thick her blood and stop up the access and passage to remorse (1.5. 39-40) fail to pass because she can neither dissociate from the blood nor its metaphor of guilt and she is left impotent, castrated.

Daniel Schneider offers an interesting interpretation of the sleepwalking scene that emphasizes the psychoanalytic idea of the child striving against a parent and the consequences emanating from such sentiment. He notes that Lady Macbeth compromises her own potency when she maliciously seizes the potency of Duncan, the father, hence prompting her ultimate destruction. He adds that such woman who seeks the father's power- his phallus- will also eventually castrate her husband (deny him children) and use him as a tool (Holland 224).

The final Battle scene

The condition in which Macbeth feels "cabined, cribbed, confined, bound in to saucy doubts and fears" (3.4.24-25) is not a specific outcome to the appearance of Banquo's ghost, but a more psychological condition of the maternal world in which he is held hostage. Macduff, "the man not of woman born" is the only man who can cut Macbeth loose from this maternal influence. The man who will destroy Macbeth is one who must be free of the slightest taint of woman even birth (Holland 226). Macbeth and Macduff are similar to a great extent in that respect since both represent the son's anger at and eventual murder of the father: Macbeth versus Duncan as king and Macduff versus Macbeth now king. Both engage in acts of murder: Macbeth is "dispatched" by his wife to kill Duncan and Macduff "dispatches" himself by leaving his family behind to be butchered. Both men have blood on their hands and both must suffer therefore the punishment of being child-less. In preparation of this last scene, Shakespeare exposes Macduff as a traitor as well, a father compromising his family by abandoning them and fleeing to safety; a man, as described by his wife, who "wants the natural touch". Lady Macduff explains to her son just before they are butchered by Macbeth's murderers that a traitor is one who swears and lies and therefore must be hanged and that no justification can be offered to explain his treason. Like Macbeth, Macduff has failed the family and is therefore no better. With

this in mind, the final confrontation between Macbeth and Macduff which results in Macduff's triumphant beheading of Macbeth does not create a hero out of the already flawed Macduff.

At the peak of his desperation now that the enemy has marched to the castle, Macbeth refuses to take his own life like a "Roman fool". Coming face to face with his promised murderer- the man not born of woman- "cows " Macbeth's "better part of man" (5.8.18), as did Banquo's ghost when it "unmanned him in folly" (3.4.73) and "protested" him "The baby of a girl" (3.4.106-107). Carried away with a temporary surge of fear, Macbeth thus announces to Macduff that he will not fight him, "I'll not fight with thee", in a desperate attempt to escape a destiny foretold by the witches. Macduff responds by demanding of Macbeth to yield his sword and his life and calls Macbeth "coward". The labeling itself reverses Macbeth's hesitancy and fear and prompts him to take action. This is not the first time Macbeth has been labeled as such; Lady Macbeth has incited him earlier to the murder of Duncan by accusing him of cowardice and describing his hopes as green and pale, and Macduff's words similarly hit Macbeth where he is most insecure: his autonomy as man. Inflamed by anger, and wishing to bring wholesomeness back to his fragmented self, he embraces action and chooses to die with honor rather than "kiss the ground before young Malcolm's feet" (5.8.28). Unlike the effeminate Macdonwald who relied on Fortune to win his battle over Macbeth at the beginning of the play, Macbeth decides to fight this last battle and destroy his enemy relying on his own valor, the shield of his resolute manliness, dismissing any supernatural help through the equivocations of the witches. In Macbeth's words to Macduff in this final confrontation, we sense not only fearlessness, but a genuine attempt to validate a self-made manly image. Macbeth dies a heroic death facing his enemy with his wounds in the forefront no less than the valiant, young Siward whose death, as his father noted, marks him as God's soldier.

Conclusion

Shakespeare's *Macbeth* is a seventeenth-century play that explores the controversial definition of masculinity by depicting the male protagonist's struggle to establish and maintain his autonomy as a man. Throughout the play, Macbeth alternates between two statuses; one epitomizes ideal heroic manhood and the other utter vulnerability. The heroic image positions Macbeth in the world of the classic epic heroes whose masculinity is paradoxically woven with nobility as well as violent aggression. However, the condition of his utter vulnerability positions him as a victim in the metaphorical realm of the malevolent mother. His masculinity as such is revealed as fragile and unstable.

Masculinity and femininity in their social and cultural contexts become paradoxical notions in *Macbeth*. The obvious contradiction in the representation of the male and the female conveys Shakespeare's own ambivalence about what constitutes them. Lady Macbeth and the witches are portrayed as "unnatural" females with the former's firm and masculine resolve and the latter's masculine looks. They emerge as oddities in female terrain, particularly when they are juxtaposed against Lady Macduff's genuine female vulnerability. The male on the other hand, is represented through two different and contradictory images. First is the image of Duncan who is supposed to be the representative of the Scottish warrior culture with its peculiar measuring of valor with bloodiness, yet is portrayed with a softness, passivity and meekness exclusive to the female. Second is the representation of Macbeth who fluctuates between violent aggression and utter vulnerability to the female. The mixed and complex signals the play sends about what it means to be female or male dominate the world of the play making it impossible to distinguish between both.

A psychoanalytic reading of the text, however, provides insight into this dilemma of gender. The assumptions made by psychoanalysis liberate gender through the acknowledgement that femininity and masculinity can co-exist in the same body. Psychoanalysis adds to the text because it reads into the mind and thoughts of the writer and the characters he creates. By probing into the unconscious, the study with which psychoanalysis primarily occupies itself, meaning is generated that sets itself outside the bounds of the historical, the social or the cultural. The focus becomes then the individual and his inner psyche, not the culture or the history. The question of whether Shakespeare has intended his text to be an arena where normative cultural and social definitions are contested or whether the text itself happens to be a medium where Shakespeare communicates unconsciously his anxieties remains open for criticism.

The world of *Macbeth* where "Fair is foul and foul is fair" enacts the blurring of lines. In this same world, the distinctions between hero and villain, good and evil, right and wrong, masculine and feminine exemplify the struggle of the author to draw adequate conclusions. In his continuous comparison to "the other", be it male or female, Macbeth is forced to re-evaluate his masculinity adopting in the process extreme measures which further alienate him from the heroic self image he establishes for himself in the battlefield. His success and failure at meeting the expectations that others project onto him make it impossible for him to uphold and maintain his own expectations. His unsettled anxiety over gender brings him to his eventual self-destruction. Driven by "visible" forces outside himself- the witches promises, his wife's venomous provocations, and customs that advocate aggression to achieve eminence- and "hidden" forces within himself- fear of castration, losing the object of love, and a destructive sense of guilt, there is little the protagonist can do to resist.

The introduction of Macbeth through the captain's account of the battle tells of a man with exemplary valor, an ideal code of morality and solid confidence. However, it turns out that this larger than life hero is a man in a state of psychological flux trying to conform to an ideal of manhood in a world that persistently challenges its meaning. His wife's words provide excellent insight into her husband's inner conflicts. Upon receiving his letter which celebrated his victory in battle and the witches' prophecies, Lady Macbeth admits that her husband is a man with ambition yet "too full of the milk of human kindness"(1.5.13) to pursue that ambition; he would not play false yet would wrongly win. All she needs to do is pour her poison in his ears and employ her power of persuasion so he can have the "illness that should attend it" (1.5.16). Lady Macbeth is not just the wife who provides camaraderie and love, but in a metaphorical sense, she is like a mother who is responsible for both the autonomy and fragmentation of her child. Her role as instigator and his role as follower parallel very much the mother and the son, a relationship where the son must obey or else he will be eternally damned. The fact that Macbeth succumbs to his shrewish wife's "poison" so quickly proves his failure to find validity in his earlier conceptions of himself and his masculinity. Macbeth recognizes the absurdity of sticking to such deceitful and deluding notions as early as act two after his murder of Duncan and the guards. When he is questioned by Macduff on why he kills the guards, Macbeth publicly denounces the view of man. His response of "Who can be wise, amazed, temp'rate and furious, loyal and neutral, in a moment? No man" (2.3.101-102) is Shakespeare's outcry of the impossibility of establishing ideal manhood.

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